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KHPA Awarded \$40.3 Million Federal Grant

Five-Year Grant Will Facilitate SCHIP Expansion, Streamline Eligibility System

(TOPEKA) – Applying for benefits under the Kansas Medicaid program and the State Children’s Health Insurance Program will soon become easier, smoother and more convenient, thanks to a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Kansas Health Policy Authority was notified this week that it has been awarded a five-year, \$40.3 million grant from the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), a division of HHS. The money will be used to purchase new computer systems to manage KHPA’s eligibility system and to fund outreach efforts to make sure people in Kansas who are eligible for medical assistance actually get enrolled.

“This grant couldn’t come at a better time, as we gear up to implement the expansion of SCHIP that the legislature authorized this year,” said Dr. Andy Allison, Acting Executive Director of KHPA. “The SCHIP expansion will eventually add upwards of about 9,000 more children to the program. But the latest estimates suggest there may also be more than 30,000 Kansas children who are already eligible for either Medicaid or SCHIP, but for whatever reason are not enrolled. This grant will greatly improve our ability to reach the people we’re supposed to serve.”

Among the projects that will be funded with the grant are: hiring additional counselors who will work directly with applicants out of safety net clinics throughout the state; developing an on-line application process for medical benefits; and acquiring a new, automated eligibility system to replace the current system, which is more than 20 years old.

“One of the best ways to lower the cost of health care is to cut out redundant and complicated paperwork,” said Kansas Gov. Mark Parkinson. “Improving health information technology is a critical step in that effort – unfortunately, with the current economic situation, states can’t afford to make the much needed computer upgrades, which is why this grant is so appreciated.”

(more)

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“This has been a priority for the Kansas Health Policy Authority from the beginning,” said KHPA Board Chairman Joe Tilghman (TILL-man). “Kansas is one of the few states in the country with a rising rate of uninsured residents. We know there are people out there who need health care and would qualify for Medicaid or SCHIP if they applied. But we haven’t had the resources to reach out to them, or the technology to make it happen. With this grant, that’s about to change.

In July 2009, there were 265,618 people enrolled in the Kansas Medicaid program. Another 38,683 were enrolled in SCHIP.

Currently, SCHIP is available to children up to age 18 in families with incomes below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Legislation enacted this year will raise that limit up to 250 percent of the 2008 poverty level, or \$44,000 per year for a family of three. The expansion will take effect in January 2010.

KHPA would like to thank the following community partners for their assistance in applying for the grant, and their continued participation in helping administer the new efforts:

- **Kansas Health Foundation**, which provided both financial and technical assistance for the grant application, and which will provide \$200,000 in local matching funds during Year 1 of the grant period.
- **Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved (KAMU)**, which has agreed to provide office space and technical support for the new eligibility staff who will be stationed at various safety net clinics around the state
- **Kansas Action for Children**, which assisted in writing the grant application, and is providing ongoing support in developing outreach strategies to increase SCHIP enrollment
- **Kansas Health Institute**, which assisted in writing the grant application and will provide external evaluation on the effectiveness of the project.
- **Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services**, KHPA’s partner in an ongoing multi-year planning effort to review and improve the state’s enrollment process.